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Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005

Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.2/58/L.34

Statement submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly

1. Under the terms of operative paragraph 8 of draft resolution A/C.2/58/L.34, the General Assembly would request the Secretary-General to defray the cost of the participation of two government representatives from each least developed country in the annual assessment of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 by the Economic and Social Council.

2. The Secretariat would like to draw the attention of the Committee to General Assembly resolution 1798 (XVII), as amended by General Assembly resolutions 2128 (XX), 2245 (XXI), 2489 (XXIII), 2491 (XXIX), 41/176, 41/213, 42/214, 42/225, section VI, 43/217, section IX, and 45/248 A, section XIII, which sets the rules and procedures governing the payment of travel and/or subsistence expenses of members of certain organs and subsidiary organs by the United Nations. In accordance with this resolution, the United Nations shall pay the travel, but no subsistence expenses for (a) not more than five representatives, including alternate representatives, of each Member State designated as a least developed country attending a regular session of the General Assembly; and (b) for one representative of each Member State participating in a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council or in a subcommission or subcommittee of a functional commission, where such representatives are nominated by their Governments in consultation with the Secretary-General and subsequently confirmed by the Council or where, in the case of representatives nominated directly by their Governments, the Council recommends and the General Assembly decides that such payments should be made. The adoption of operative paragraph 8 of draft resolution A/C.2/58/L.34 would therefore require an exception to General Assembly resolution 1798 (XVII).

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3. The attention of the Committee is also drawn to the provisions of section VI of General Assembly resolution 45/248 B, in which the Assembly reaffirmed that the Fifth Committee was the appropriate Main Committee of the Assembly entrusted with responsibilities for administrative and budgetary matters, and also reaffirmed the role of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. Under the circumstances, the consideration by the Second Committee of the text of paragraph 8 of draft resolution A/C.2/58/L.34 may be considered to be in contravention of resolution 45/248 B since it directly addresses resource issues which fall within the exclusive prerogative of the Fifth Committee.

4. The cost of the participation of two government representatives from each least developed country in the annual assessment of the Programme of Action by the Economic and Social Council is estimated at $783,600 per biennium. This amount covers the full normal airfare for two representatives from each least developed country to the annual substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, held once per biennium in New York and once per biennium in Geneva. It is assumed that the phrase "to defray the cost of participation" is intended to cover transportation expenses but not subsistence expenses.

5. It will be recalled that, under the procedures established by the General Assembly in its resolutions 41/213 and 42/211, a contingency fund is established for each biennium to accommodate additional expenditures derived from legislative mandates not provided for in the programme budget.

6. Should the General Assembly adopt draft resolution A/C.2/58/L.34, an additional provision of $783,600 would be required over and above the resources initially proposed under section 10, Least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005. The additional requirement would represent a charge against the contingency fund for the biennium 2004-2005.

7. Since the terms of operative paragraph 8 of the draft resolution are not consistent with the existing General Assembly resolutions on travel entitlements of members of organs or subsidiary organs of the United Nations, it is proposed that a decision on this paragraph be deferred until the Fifth Committee, which is the appropriate main committee dealing with administrative matters, including travel entitlements, under General Assembly resolution 1798 (XVII), has had an opportunity to review the issue.